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ABSTRACT

Created at the Library of the University of California, Berkeley, by a task force on machine readable data files (MRDFs), this policy provides guidance to materials selectors in acquiring MRDFs through purchase, gift, lease, network, or other cooperative arrangements. The guidelines offer a collection development framework and identify problems to be addressed in related areas. The policy governs use of funds for applications software, bibliographic databases, courseware, and numeric (nonbibliographic) databases. The policy specifies that MRDFs being considered for selection should: (1) not duplicate existing materials; (2) follow collecting parameters already in place; (3) represent materials useful to users; (4) be available in formats currently accessible by appropriate hardware in the library or on the campus; (5) be substituted for printed information with extreme caution; (6) not be acquired when the sole purpose is to provide a depository or custodial function; (7) be weighed against other uses of book monies; (8) reflect the quality expected of materials in other formats; (9) have adequate documentation; (10) consider the amount of staff time required to make adequate use of the database; and (11) be accessible under the strictures of copyright and licensing laws. Strategies for improving access to bibliographic and nonbibliographic MRDFs are outlined, and policies addressing instructional and general applications software are listed. (SD)

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University of California, Berkeley, Library July 20, 1987

COLLECTION POLICY GOVERNING MACHINE READABLE DATA FILES

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I. POLICY OBJECTIVES

A. Introduction

This policy has been created by the Task Force on Machine Readable Data Files (MRDFs) in response to the request of the Collection Management and Development Committee. It is aimed at providing guidance to Berkeley's selectors in acquiring MRDFs for the Berkeley collections, whether by purchase, gift, lease, network, or other cooperative arrangements. Because technology and information access is changing so rapidly, it is expected that these guidelines will be under continuing review by appropriate groups in the Library. They are meant to provide a reasonable collection development framework for the next five years, and to identify problems in related areas which need to be addressed.

B. Definition

AACR2 defines a machine readable data file as "a body of information coded by methods that require the use of a machine (typically a computer) for processing." Present formats include magnetic tape, floppy and hard disks, compact discs and video disks. Such files may be categorized by the following types:

1) bibliographic files -- these files contain information which leads the user to material, usually textual, rather than being an end in themselves. They are similar in use to library catalogs or to printed abstracting and indexing services.

2) textual/numeric/graphic files -- otherwise known as non-bibliographic files, these are analogous to conventional library materials in that they are an end in themselves; that is, they contain full texts or numeric or graphic data. Such files may require programming or software and sophisticated knowledge in order to obtain and manipulate the information contained in them.

3) instructional software -- these files are programs which instruct or guide the user through a series of concepts, processes, or models. Such programs may be interactive, requiring the user to input data as part of the learning process. In most instances, however, the input data is not retained in a storage mechanism after the termination of the session. Such programs include, for example, programmed learning texts; modeling and simulation programs; and writing and composition aids.

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4) Applications software -- these files are programs which are intended to manipulate and/or organize the textual or numeric input of the user. Examples of such programs are word processing and spreadsheet programs; database managers; and statistical analysis programs.

C. Selection Responsibility and Constraints

MRDFs are selected for acquisition or subscription by the language and subject specialists currently responsible for all other formats being added to Berkeley's collections. Acquiring such files is a legitimate extension of traditional collecting goals. Realistically, however, MRDFs present special problems of cost, bibliographic control, accessibility, acquisition, storage and preservation. These considerations will require more intensive investigation by appropriate Library groups. Policies governing gift materials apply as well to MRDFs; therefore, the Library reserves the right to limit its permanent collections to those items selected for the scholarly needs of the campus community.

D. Scope

The criteria set forth below will govern the four above-mentioned types of data file: bibliographic, textual/numeric/graphic, instructional software, and applications software. The policy covers use of funds for acquiring data files regardless of funding source.

E. General Collection-Related Criteria

Machine readable data files considered for acquisition by selectors should:

-- avoid duplication of other campus resources;

-- follow current collecting parameters already in place as represented by the Collection Development Policy Statement, individual department statements and other related documents;

- represent materials useful and important to a significant segment of the Library's user community, and reflect current academic needs;

-- be available in formats currently accessible by appropriate hardware already in the Library or on the campus;

-- be an enhancement and enrichment of current collections, or should provide improved access to information if already available in some other format;

-- be substituted for printed information with extreme caution because of the current volatility of the information industry, the limited number of simultaneous users which can presently be accommodated, and the requirements for staff assistance;

-- not be acquired when the sole purpose for such acquisition is to provide a depository or custodial function -- collection needs must be the paramount consideration;

-- be evaluated in light of other potential acquisitions, and weighed against other uses of book monies;

-- reflect the excellence, comprehensiveness, and authoritativeness expected of materials in other formats;

-- have available adequate documentation;

-- take into account the amount of staff time required to provide adequate use of the database;

-- be broadly accessible under the strictures of current copyright and licensing laws.

II. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Bibliographic and Non-Bibliographic Machine Readable Data Files

Bibliographic and non-bibliographic data files are essential to the Library's mission in the electronic information age. The Library has been providing access to information in machine readable formats for over a decade through commercial database vendors. The next stage of MRDF access is to acquire actual data files in various electronic formats, e.g., computer tapes or optical disks. These MRDFs may be produced by a variety of organizations, including the University of California, state and federal government agencies, associations, and commercial publishers. The Library is potentially interested in all types of machine readable data files as long as they meet the selection criteria set forth in the MRDF policy statement.

The current state of technology offers access to computerized data files through three media:

1) online through commercial vendors. The Library already provides access to hundreds of online data files through several commercial vendors (DIALOG, BRS, Wilsonline, etc.)

2) computer tapes and disks. These may be purchased or leased from a variety of producers and mounted on local mainframe computers. (At the present time, the Library has no experience with this format, although it has the capability of accessing computers in the Library and in Evans Hall.)

3) optical disks. This electronic format is becoming available for purchase, and some campus libraries have begun to test and acquire products.

Strategies for implementing improved access to machine readable data files on the Berkeley campus include the following:

1) developing and maintaining a knowledge of data files, in whatever electronic format. Each Library selector should be familiar with major data files in his/her selection area(s) and be able to make referrals to individuals or organizations that may provide access.

2) offering access to data files in optical disk formats which are becoming available on the market in a variety of subject areas, within budgetary and staff constraints and as appropriate. Selectors should determine needs and make recommendations regarding funding arrangements (book funds, joint ventures with departments, grants, cost recovery from users, etc.).

3) designating several campus libraries as initial user sites for MRDFs, since prohibitive hardware costs may prevent many Library units from buying the equipment necessary to access MRDFs in their collection areas.

4) training staff to be available to provide basic instruction.

5) coordinating acquisition of computer tapes and disks requiring mainframe support with the Academic Computing Center, Division of Library Automation, or Library Systems Office.

6) evaluating costs of databases available online through commercial and other vendors to determine whether it is more economical to purchase or lease the database or to continue to use it through the vendor.

B. Instructional and General Applications Software

1. Scope

The instructional and general applications software covered by this policy includes materials purchased for inclusion in the collections of the Library from commercial producers, as well as those acquired as gifts or at minimal cost ("freeware" or "shareware"). The policy does not include software purchased exclusively for staff use.

University of California, Berkeley, Library July 20, 1987

2. Collecting Responsibility

a. Instructional Software

(1) Primary Collecting/Collections

The Media Resources Center (MRC) is currently the primary unit in the Library system involved in acquiring, housing, and providing access to a collection of instructional software.

The MRC is responsible for developing a core collection of software to support curricular and study needs on campus, with particular emphasis on undergraduate curricula. Purchases for this basic level collection are made on MRC materials funds.

All fields of study covered by Moffitt's book/serial collection policy are appropriate for the MRC's software collection. Preference is given to software which is of interest to a broad audience, rather than to more specialized materials.

The collection of instructional software supporting more specialized subject interests is the responsibility of the appropriate Library selector for the subject area concerned. These materials should be purchased on the corresponding Library book fund, and may be housed in MRC or in the unit which funds the purchase, if supporting hardware is available. Similarly, software which accompanies printed works acquired for various Library collections may be housed in either the MRC or in the funding unit, if the appropriate public access can be provided to these materials and if they can be effectively conserved by the unit.

(2) Course Reserve Software

Access to course reserve materials in machine readable form is currently provided by several non-Library units on campus, including the Tolman Microcomputer Facility and various departmental computing facilities such as those administered by the English Department and School of Business Administration. To the extent allowed by staff and hardware resources and license requirements, MRC will act as a supplementary courseware reserve unit.

b. General Applications Software

Library units may purchase general applications software for public use only insofar as the programs support the general collection development aims of the unit, and supporting hardware is available to make these materials publicly available. These materials should not be purchased on the unit's monograph or serial book funds. Because of the frequently high cost of popular applications software and the high investment of staff time and expertise required to monitor use of such packages, this type of program

will not initially be collected by MRC. In the case of some applications packages such as word processors and spreadsheet programs, general public access is currently provided by established campus facilities, particularly the Tolman Microcomputer Facility. As the MRC microcomputer services develop and relations with other campus computing centers are better defined, this general policy may be revised.

c. Documentation

Complete documentation for the software acquired should be maintained by the unit which houses the materials. In addition, MRC will maintain a collection of standard reference works and vendor catalogs covering these materials. These resources are available for use by selectors and the general public.

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